

## Resolution of Afar Forum Conference 2018

The Afar Forum bi-annual Conference was held in Brussels, from July 26-28, 2018. The conference under the theme **Bridging the Gap: Current Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Afar People**, was attended by Afar scholars, civil society representatives, non-governmental organizations, researchers, students, and Afar political opposition organizations which represent Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

Thought-provoking lectures and presentations were delivered on challenges and opportunities facing the Afar people. Several suggestions and recommendations were put forward to enhance and improve the living conditions of the Afar people in Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. A wide range of subjects were discussed, some of which included: systematic marginalization, exclusions from making important decision on various policy, human rights violations, lack of justice and rampant corruption, environmental degradation and water pollution, and the case of Awash Rive. Additionally, the dire impact of previous national projects have been addressed and the conference demands further consultation and proper socio-ecology studies to be implemented in order to examine all aspects of the projects, including the likely future impact on the demography of the area including Afar pastoralists and their communities.

The current political change in the Horn of Africa has resulted in rapprochement of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The normalization of relationship between the two countries undoubtedly will provide better cooperation in the areas of the economy as well as social and cultural ties for the Afar people who have suffered most due to the conflict between the countries. Therefore, the Afar Forum conference participants welcome the conducive political environment and support the newfound relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Participants also evoke the two governments final peace agreement must include the Afar people in Eritrea and the right for self-determination.

The current social inequities and exclusive policies towards the Afar People in Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia are politically, socially, and economically unacceptable, unfair, and could essentially be resolved if the Afar people have the right to participate in the political and socioeconomic process.

The participants further urge the Eritrean, Djibouti and Ethiopian governments to allow full participation of the Afar people in addressing the unequal distribution of political power, economic resources, and promote participation in policy-making and implementation.

### **The following resolutions were adopted:**

- The Afar Forum supports the reform process initiated by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia;
- The conference participants encourage the Afar Regional State to support and be part of the ongoing reform process in Ethiopia;
- The conference participants acknowledge the reform demands by Afar Youth Movement “Xukko Cina” and encourage the Afar Regional State to accommodate the demands vowed by Afar educated youth rather than intimidating them;
- The conference participants unequivocally support the normalization between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the peace process. However, demand that the Afar people are included in the final peace agreement and their quest for self-determination to be respected;
- The participants demand that the Eritrean government stop widespread and systematic human rights violations against the Red Sea Afar people;
- The Afar Forum encourages all Afar political parties from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Djibouti to put their differences aside and work together within their respective countries to achieve better economic, social and political conditions for the Afar people;

- End the 40 years of political oppression, economic marginalization, social exclusion and denial of equal access to education, trainings and employment opportunities of the Afar people in Djibouti;
- The Afar Forum supports reconciliation and lasting peace in the sub region between Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and the Republic of Djibouti;
- The Afar Forum calls upon the governments of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Djibouti to strengthen the role of traditional leaders to have a say on conflict resolution and recognize their authority;
- Recognizing that the majority of Afar people are pastoralist, any development scheme, educational social and economic policy must benefit the people and constitutionally guaranteed to vocalize their opinions and obtain the approval of the community where major mega development projects are envisaged;
- Finally, the executive committee has announced a recommendation: The Afar Forum 2020 bi-annual conference should be held in Ethiopia. The conference participants accepted the recommendation with no objection. Date and place of conference will be announced in the near future.

**The Afar Forum calls upon the Afar people:**

- To transcend the regional and ethnic divide and work together by building trust among each other.
- To work hand in hand as agents for peace, democracy, and development.

The Afar Forum Conference 2018

Brussels, Belgium

July 28, 2018